



GO! The journey to number

As our children experience activities that help them to isolate concepts (audio 2) and manipulate real objects through which they absorb abstract ideas (audio 3), they will be equipped and ready for the exciting journey to number. If they are not prepared well, this journey may feel an uphill struggle. For the child who has this preparation...

...the journey to number can be like a walk in the park!

Make counting easy

Children need to *hear* the language of number. As with everything, they absorb what they hear. As they hear adults counting routinely, they simply assimilate what they hear and begin to count too... counting by rote. Their auditory sense is the most vital as they *hear* us counting and (over time) begin to verbalise 1 through 10 themselves.

When counting is woven into our everyday lives (counting how long to keep the cold compress on after a bump), we should resist attaching the number names to anything. Children will simply be assimilating numbers 1 to 10 in sequence. In time, they will say some in sequence (with gaps) before continuing through to 10.

Maria is fluent in English. The UK has been her adopted home for most of her adult life. However, whenever she counts, she reverts to her native language, Hungarian. This is not because she cannot count in English; but indicates the language of number (counting by rote) was absorbed in her early childhood.

Count forward!

Counting songs and nursery rhymes help us, although it is helpful to stick to those that count forward, such as,

'One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive.'

'What's the time Mr Wolf?'

(It is possible to include counting forward even with rhymes that count down - *five little speckled frogs – count those who are no longer on the 'log' between each verse*).

One to ten is the basis of our decimal system. The more we simply count (forward) to 10, the more we prepare the ground for ever larger numbers. Resist counting beyond 10 at this stage.



Think a little...

Which number songs and rhymes do you enjoy with your children?

How can we change them to make sure that they hear numbers being counted forward?

Relating number to quantity

In audio 2 of this set, we considered how confusing it can be for a child to disentangle different ideas or concepts. They are helped if we **isolate the concept**.

In the following audio, we considered how children need to handle real objects to absorb their features. These **materialised abstractions** support children by relating what they are manipulating with the relevant concept.

As we continue the journey to number, these two ideas work together to help the child extract the 'oneness of one', the 'twoness of two' and the 'threeness of three'.

By handling objects that are meaningful, and using identical objects,

the journey to number is made easy.

Luca had arrived at nursery with a bagful of conkers! He put some on the Nature Table, proudly showed them to his friends even used some in the craft area – rolling them in paint to make patterns. Georgie, his key person, asked if they could use some for counting. Luca could confidently count to 10, but Georgie wanted to make sure he understood what the number names meant in terms of quantity. She wanted him to be able to handle objects that were meaningful for him.

She found 5 bowls and invited him to say “one” and count 1 conker into the 1st bowl. She continued with 2, 3, 4, 5. Luca found it tricky to hold the 5 conkers destined for the 5th bowl in his hands. He was both relating the number name with different quantities but also gaining a tangible impression of growth quantity (and therefore number).

Luca was familiar with the number names. Now he began linking these number names to counting meaningful objects. He easily began connecting sets of quantities to the number names he knew - *playfully*. From here he can move doing the same with sets of quantities up to 10.

Numerals are *everywhere!*

Children who are familiar with counting forward to 10 and who can connect to different quantities are well placed to connect to the numerals they represent. A numeral is the abstract symbol that represents different quantities.



Make your finger the educator!

Clocks, pages, scales, postcodes, calculators, phones, door numbers... As adults, we typically notice numbers silently. Sarah inspires us to simply point them out and make the connections...

Listen to yourself... & others (without criticism!)

How many times do we use functional language with our children?

"It's 9 o'clock already, we'll be late!"

How often is it pressure-related?

"We need to find a 6th birthday card for Jack"

Numerals make sense when related to familiar, everyday activities. It's about being proactive and seizing those moments in the everyday.

Sand writing numerals, numerals that can be traced and felt (such as sandpaper numerals) are ideal. Such resources help children to form (write) the numerals as well as learn their names.

And that's the start of the child's journey to number.

With this preparation, our children are ready to fly!

Introducing P-I-L-L-O-W talk

It may be helpful to use the P-I-L-L-O-W acronym to support us in seizing the moments in the everyday.

Journeying to Number with our children is about being intentional in our interactions with our children.

P-I-L-L-O-W talk

PLAN what's best for me!

- What can I do in the day that will connect with my child(ren) journey to number?
- I need to seize the moment and be intentional to count aloud / point out a numeral...



INSPIRE me!

- How can I make their journey to number meaningful, fun & relevant?
- I need to remember that the things I consider chores can be exciting for children.

LET me do it!

- What can my child do to make counting relevant and meaningful?
- I need to remember that this is a journey. It will take time for them to do things capably and independently.

Language

- What language will I use that is relevant?
- I need to be intentional and keep my language focussed on whichever 'concept' is most relevant.

Observe me!

- What can I *see* in my child? What are they most fascinated with?
- I need to retain my sense of 'wonder...' (*Delving a Little Deeper; set 2; See Me!*)

WOW – What's Next?

- What can I do next to consolidate their journey to number?
- I need to retain my sense of awe and praise what they are doing.

Before next time...

Working through some of the ideas in this audio using the P-I-L-L-O-W acronym

Speaking number names by rote

Counting individual objects

Recognising numerals

And... counting objects to match each numeral.

Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through

<https://sarahrowledge.com/>

Inspiring Adult Minds (for further training)

www.turninglittlestones.co.uk

Turning Little Stones & Delving a little Deeper